



The Horse's Mouth

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IOC website: [http:// www.iockansai.com/](http://www.iockansai.com/)



Well IOCers, it seems we've all had a fun spring. In this month's newsletter we've got articles about hiking, cycling, yoga and whisky-drinking. And of course, eating, which I'm discovering is a staple for all IOC events. It seems that the old saying "after a day's walk, everything has twice the usual value" is true, especially when it comes to food! We've got quite a few events lined up for June and July, so it looks to be a fun-filled summer. See you out there-

-Josh

Climb the mountains and get their good tidings. Nature's peace will flow into you as sunshine flows into trees. The winds will blow their own freshness into you, and the storms their energy, while cares will drop off like autumn leaves. ~John Muir

May Events

Bruce's House in Nara Prefecture

May 13th and 14th

Leader: Chris

Participants: Jacquelyn, John, Koji, Damien, Heather, Katie, Cristina, Keiko, Yukiyo, Andre, Yuko, Fumie

Reports: Jacquelyn, Koji, Yuko, Damien



Jacquelyn: Nara is always a great place to escape to for the weekend, and even with an all day rain on Sat. it still held true. The scenery was maybe even more stunning in the rain, with mist rising from the mountains. Being flexible let us to sleep in Sat. morning, still meet for a short ride to the onsen and end up having a great evening at friend Bruce's unofficial B&B. Bruce was a terrific host with a nourishing and tasty dinner waiting for us. Conversation was lively all evening and the big sleep over with everyone sleeping in every available space was just fine. Sunday's plan left people divided into 3 groups, to do our own thing as levels and interest allowed. All in all a great time with prospects for future fun at the same place.



Koji: Rain Rain Saturday, there is no cancel messages, go or not to go. That's the question. In fact, 14 people joined Bruce's temple house. We enjoyed organic food and morning 2 hours Yoga.

In case of me, good digest and three feces on Sunday. Id like to go there again in the summer.

Yuko: We really had a really wonderful time during the relaxing weekend at a small temple (Hozoji) in Haibara. Everything there was just great! Organic food, which was cooked and even farmed by Bruce, the owner of Hozoji, were totally distinctive than any foods I had ever eaten! The other great thing is we did was have a yoga lesson at the garden with a pretty view of an old village and mountains in Nara. Of course, we had a great walk on Sunday, around the

Muroji Temple with some of the members. It was also really enjoyable! Anyway, I felt very refreshed after I came back and I had told my colleagues on the next Monday that I felt like I went to an overseas trip. And I really mean it! Thanks a lot to Chris and Bruce for organizing a great weekend !!!

Damien: Day one: rain, Bruce, potatoes, rain, potatoes, potatoes, rain, flour, banana, rain, onsen! pesto! kampa!

Day two: yoga, sun, biking, downhill, more sun, @#&! hashiriya, biking, soba, uphill, uphill, uphill, onsen! more pesto! thanks to Chris and Bruce!



Ponponyama and Suntory Whiskey Hike

May 14th

Leader: Benoit

Participants: Benoit, Yuka, Mayumi, Noriko Yabuchan, Eric, Ute, Jeremy, Nao, Keiko Yamaguchi, Junko and the mysterious guy!

Reports: Eric and Junko



Eric: Benoit led and organized a "Ponpon Yama" hike for the month of May. I want to thank him for leading the group and coming prepared with accurate maps and times! I saw in the previous newsletter that there was a Ponpon Yama hike on April 1st as well. As with that group, a total of 11 hikers took part in the event – 10 IOC members and one unknown American! It was supposed to be a rainy day, but we were lucky – I thought the weather was perfect for a long day of hiking. We started at about 8:15am and proceeded to walk up towards Ponpon Yama. Benoit wanted to arrive at noon, so we didn't have much time to waste! The hike was perfect in that it was not overly strenuous, but it did have some challenging spots. Just ask Jeremy who had to carry two bags up the steepest part (I'll let him explain why)!

We also ran into a little problem, when we found a small pond blocking our path. Some of the group took their shoes off and

walked through the water. Still others decided to try and run/jump across (both with and without the help of the boys). I think Junko decided to walk through the water with her shoes on. I'm still not sure why!

There was no one sharing the path with us until we got to near the top of the mountain! I'm not sure where they came from, but there was a hiking group reaching the summit around the same time. So while most of the day we couldn't find another soul – we shared lunch with about 50 elderly Japanese people! One man in English explained the "Ponpon" sound using his walking stick. I don't think we understood, but we all politely agreed and nodded our head – we were too hungry to do otherwise! We then began our decent about 12:30pm and ended up at the Suntory Whisky museum at 3:30pm in time for the last tour of the day....



On the way up...



At the top of Ponponyama

Junko: This hike was very fun especially for many of "呑ん兵衛-nonbee-"(the person loves drinking) after such great hike on that shiny nice spring day. Keiko was the person who was the most excited about the whiskey hike. When she first saw the event message "Whisky Hiking" sent from Benoit, she instantly thought she would bring an whisky bottle in her hand while she was on the hike on Ponpon-yama, she said.

The hiking course itself was not very hard but the route was relatively long for me this time since my knees have something wrong, and I haven't hiked for a long time. Especially after seeing the



sign saying "Suntory Whisky Distillery" -it looked the factory was up far away to on another hill. When we all came up to a few of the steep hills, Keiko happily cheered us up and said "go-whisky-go!!". It comforted and motivated all of us to finish that long distance hike! Since Benoit kindly made a special arrangement for the guided tour with the factory at 15:30, we needed to be in a hurry to get there. I saw Keiko breaking into a run straight toward her whisky! Oops! I mean toward the building. I didn't have any energy left to make the run like her... Then we all were welcomed by Benoit's friends and the

guide from the factory waiting for us at the entrance. The tour started from sometime after 15:30, meaning we hiked for seven hours!

In the factory, we were all guided by stopping at every corner with her explanations about their Suntory Whisky such as how the whisky is made with what kind of the wheat, where does the color of the whiskey come from or what is the difference between beer and whisky, which all were something that Keiko never seemed to get interested in... The guide questioned to the people in our tour group "Which whisky bottles do you think would taste better than the other one, 15year's one or 12 year's one?" Her answer was "No doubt that the 15 year's one should be better than 12 year's. What an easy question she just asked us, isn't it ,huh? Everyone would know the answer easily just after tasting them, don't we, huh?" Very cool answer. I learned that she just wanted the guide to bring her straight to the tasting room! Soon after walking through the storage warehouse where Benoit, Mayumi and I took the pictures with the barrels of our birthday year, we were guided to the tasting room where there were glasses with Suntory whisky and some snacks ready on our table :) You can imagine how she smiled happily and enjoyed the tastes?



Such great hiking lead by Benoit made our whisky shots very enjoyable. Most of us had two glasses each. I am not fond of whisky, but as Keiko said, the whiskey called "響 -Hibiki- (means echo)" tasted fine to me. Of course, the tour and tasting are all free. I hope I could go for "Beer Hiking " to Suntory beer distillery in Katsura, next time. Thanks again Benoit for organizing this fun trip!

Yoshimi's Kobe Hike and BBQ

May 27th

Leader: Yoshimi Suzuki

Participants: Yoshimi, Noriko, Peter, Eric, Naomi, Sachiko, Yuko

Report: Yuko Ohmachi

This is my first outdoor event at IOC and was full of fun and surprise. From the beginning, I was surprised...I didn't know the leader Yoshimi was a guy! We exchanged some e-mails before meeting and I thought Yoshimi was a beautiful young lady from his writing...! Can you imagine how I was amazed when I first heard Yoshimi's voice on the phone to check our meeting place? I almost dropped my cell phone on the floor!



Anyway, 7 people got together at Subway Shinkobe Station(13:30) and headed for "Shinrinshokubutsuen" (<http://www.kobe-park.or.jp/shinrin/>). We were anxious about the weather until previous night of this event but it turned out to be much better than we expected. There was no rain and was not too hot and not too cold.



With only about 10 minutes walk, we reached to a great water fall, "Nunobiki- no-Taki" (<http://www.city.kobe.jp/cityoffice/83/base/mati/01-99/mati48.htm>). We got plenty of negative ions from it! After enjoying the water fall and the nice view of Kobe city from the sightseeing place, we could take a short break at Nunobiki-dam (<http://homepage3.nifty.com/Ogino/gijutu/nunobiki.htm>). Good views were wonderful but also I enjoyed talking with members while walking. There're various kinds of people in this club and conversation with them was great fun for me.

On the way up to the goal (Shinrinshokubutsuen), there're some difficult places to walk for beginners like me... steep mountain trails are of course tough for me and plus, there're "Twenty-Cross"!! We sometimes had to place the steppingstones across the river...it was more difficult to walk

across the river on that day just because it was after some rain fall. And we had to be careful, some of rocks were unstable!! They swung!! I had a "narrow escape" once, I almost rolled into the river due to slippery and tippy rocks. But the guys in the party kindly helped me across the river safely. Thank you very much!! I passed many elderly people with walking sticks on the road but I still wonder how they could manage those difficult points...

At the goal, 2 decided to walk back to the mountain trail to Shinkobe and 5 decided to take a short walk around Shinrinshokubutsuen and back to Sannomiya by bus(free) and train(530yen). If we had a little more time, we could walk and see the park more, however, there wasn't enough time...the last bus was 16:15. I suppose we can enjoy bird watching and see various kinds of plants there. Anyway we had some time left so, we looked through the museum. You can see gigantic tree sliced in rounds there.



Four met in Sannomiya before 18:00 and dined out at "Kushiya" (<http://www.kushi-ya.com/tsukaikata.html>). At first, Yoshimi planned to have a BBQ party at his place but we heard the weather was not stable in the evening on that day so he changed his plan and took us to Kushiya. Thanks to Yoshimi's coupon we could eat a lot reasonably.

Well this is my first adventure at this club as a super beginner!

Nagano Mountain Bike Adventure

May 27-28th

Leader: Chris

Participants: Rie, Kaori Asada, Kaori Arakawa, Andre, Dean, Kei, Belinda, Toshi, Sebastian, Yuka, Benoit.

Report: Benoit

After a long drive overnight, we arrived at destination, somewhere around Matsumoto and Nagano. I don't know exactly, I was sleeping on the car. Luckily, because we didn't have so much time. After a quick breakfast (too big, I felt my stomach moving with the car!... Oeurh!), we met Paul, our guide, and drove directly to the bottom of the trail. Paul prepared bikes for us. They were very good bikes, front and back suspension and everything... Well, only for the boys. Eh eh! The girls who won't have to ride up to the top of the hill had heavier and not as good bikes. Well, it's good to see boys are a bit respected sometimes! It was 10am and we were ready to start. While the "strong" boys were struggling with the slope, the "weak" girls had a ride to middle of the hill thanks to Paul's van. It was tough and steep but we did it and finally met the girls at the meeting point, exhausted. They were still fresh, smiling and chatting as usual. They have lots of fun as well apparently...



Kei and the girls.



Tough to follow Paul!

From there started the serious part: the downhill! Waouhh!! It's so great, so fast!! We nearly had no time to realize there was a bump in front of us, we passed it, thanks God, safe. Still, it was really difficult to follow Paul who seemed to enjoy his promenade... At one point, we had to pass a very steep slope. Paul, followed by Kei, Chris, Dean and I (yesss!!!) passed relatively easily. Andre and Yuka renounced after a beginning of attempt and a smooth fall. And finally, our heroic Toshi did it but that was tough! Pfiuuuh! A great ride! But it was noon, and we needed a break!

Paul and his wife organized a great lunch: huge tasty burgers as big as our face! After an effort, it's so good to eat some good food like that (Even if I'm French, I agree a good fresh burger may be a nice lunch, but not Mc Donald please!). During lunch, Paul's kids were entertaining some of us... They are really cute!



Uhhmmm, a great huge burger!



The nearly complete team.

In the afternoon, we left all together directly from Paul's house to ride the bicycle on small narrow paths around there. It was not as steep as in the morning but there were many more obstacles on the path: rocks, trees, small rivers... It was quite difficult to find the perfect trajectories, especially when you're riding as fast as you can! Luckily again, we got only few tiny

sore hurts, nothing bad... From this ride, we also had a great view points from where we took a few pictures. Beautiful!! Thanks Paul! For those who'd like to join one of his tours, please look at the website: <http://www.freerideadventuresjpn.com/about.htm>

Later, in the evening, we end at the warm Zig-Zag minshuku. The owners prepared us a succulent big dinner (nearly as big as the burger we had for lunch!). Well, we were all quite tired and jumped to our bed after a short (longer for some of us) chat together...

On Sunday, we decided to have a lazy hike around the village. Dean who brought his own bike needed more and went for a ride somewhere and got lost somewhere but finally came from nowhere just before leaving. While waiting for him, we enjoyed a nice lunch in a place where you could find a dogs' card for lunch including a tasty beefsteak and beautiful cakes for the same price as our meal! Sebastian would have been more than satisfied with such a lunch... but he was as delighted with his usual (much cheaper) croquettes... And there we were back on the road for our beloved Kansai-ken.

Thanks again Chris for organizing this great event. Thanks to the tough drivers as well, especially Toshi (I was in his car, as well as Belinda's) as he drove most of the time.



Upcoming Activities

Kyoto easy cycle & Irish night, June 17th

One stars; Cycling

Leader: Kei Sasabe & Keiko Yamaguchi

We will have an easy ride around Kyoto city from Shijo and end up in an Irish pub to see Matteo's concert.

Sea kayaking Adventure, Ushimado, June 17-18th

Two Stars; Kayaking

Leader : Yuri Takakura & Koji Otani

Let's enjoy a great sea kayaking trip in Ushimado!! We will leave Ushimado port, join a small island by kayak and camp there. On the island, we'll be able to enjoy kayaking, fishing, star watching and so on.

Green hiking, Mie, June 24-25th

One Star; Hiking

Leader : Kei Sasabe

I will lead a great hike to Mt. Miuneyama and Mt. Kurosoyama (between Nara and Mie pref.) where we will enjoy look at fresh green.

Biwako Camp, July 1-2nd

One Star; Hiking

Leader: Yuri Takakura

Let's have a nice week-end close to Biwako with some hiking, cycling, kayaking, swimming and BBQ. The meeting will be held there on Sunday morning.

Club Information

The Members

As of May 2006, we have approximately 60 members (35 from Japan and 25 from abroad), including 10 new members. 55 % of the members are female and so 45% are male.

Meeting Schedule

The next meeting will be held during the Biwako camp scheduled on the 1st and 2nd of July. Benoit will present quickly the latest decisions and ideas of the committee, with among all the modifications of the website thanks to Koji and the constitution.

Latest news from the committee

As we already introduced, we are preparing a data base for hiking and cycling events in order to help members to find ideas and prepare an event. Every leader should thus fill the activity record (to download from the website) and add a map if possible (see website: <http://watchizu.gsi.go.jp/mapsearch.html>).

Koji start to modify the website to make it a bit clearer and update the sections "Join the club" and "Prepare event". As we asked him to do lots of work (sorry Koji!), it may take some time...

Website

Please check the website, updated as often as possible by Koji! Most of the information is there. <http://www.iockansai.com/>

Activity and Newsletter Submissions

Please send all *articles for the newsletter* to Josh, at newsletter@iockansai.com; and send *any activity proposals or new events* to Mayumi, at activities@iockansai.com

IOC Equipment

IOC equipment can be rented from our Equipment Coordinator Koji. At the moment the IOC owns the following items: 5 pairs of snowshoes, 3 tents, 2 pots, 1 slide projector, 5 slide trays, 1 BBQ set, 2 BBQ grills plus stands, 1 emergency kit, 1 emergency shelter, 1 shovel, 1 whiteboard and 1 charcoal box.

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